

PERSONAL AWARENESS AND EMOTIONAL REACTIONS: A STUDY OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

KİŞİSEL FARKINDALIK VE DUYGUSAL TEPKİLER: BİR İÇERİK ANALİZİ ÇALIŞMASI

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the effects of increasing the level of self-awareness which can be defined as a person's having knowledge about how he is perceived by others. The study was conducted with experimental one group post-test design. The sample of the study consisted of 11 male, 21 female, a total of 32 participants. In order to increase the level of participants' self-awareness, an adjective check list was given to both participants and other people with whom they have social relationship; and they were asked to evaluate the items on a 5-point Likert scale with SWOT analysis. The results were plotted into graphics in which participants' own assessments and other people's assessments were compared and given to the participants. After examining the results, the participants were asked to write their feelings and thoughts. The data was analyzed through content analysis. In the content analysis, positive assessments which the person was aware of or which were in compliant with his own evaluations, negative assessments which he was aware of or which were in compliant with his own evaluations, positive assessments which he was not aware of or which weren't in compliant with his own evaluations and negative assessments which he was not aware of or which weren't in compliant with his own evaluations and the effect of these assessments were analyzed.

Key Words: Self-Awareness, Social Comparison, Content Analysis

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bireyin başkaları tarafından nasıl algılandığına ilişkin bilgi sahibi olması olarak tanımlanabilen kişisel farkındalık düzeyini artırmanın duygusal etkilerini incelemektir. Araştırma tek grup son test modelindeki deneysel desene dayalı olarak yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu üniversite öğrencisi 11' erkek, 21 'i kadın olmak üzere 32 katılımcı oluşturmuştur. Çalışmada katılımcıların kişisel farkındalık düzeyini artırmak için bir sıfat tarama listesi hem kendilerine hem de sosyal ilişki içinde olduğu insanlara verilmiş ve SWOT analizi içeren 5'li likert tipindeki bir skala üzerinden değerlendirme yapmaları sağlanmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlar bireyin kendisinin ve başkalarının değerlendirmelerini karşılaştırmalı olarak veren grafiklere dökülerek katılımcılara verilmiştir. Sonuçları gördükten sonra katılımcıların duygu ve düşüncelerini yazıya dökmeleri istenmiştir.

Elde edilen veriler içerek analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. İçerik analizinde bireyin farkında olduğu veya kendi değerlendirmeleri ile uyuşan olumlu değerlendirmelerin, farkında olduğu veya kendi değerlendirmeleri ile uyuşan olumsuz değerlendirmelerin, farkında olmadığı veya kendi değerlendirmeleri ile uyuşmayan olumlu değerlendirmelerin ve farkında olmadığı veya kendi değerlendirmeleri ile uyuşmayan olumsuz değerlendirmelerin oluşturduğu etkiler incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kişisel Farkındalık, Sosyal Karşılaştırma, İçerik Analizi

It has been observed that people compare themselves with others in order to determine their situation and position, to be happy and to be motivated (Festinger, 1954). Studies have found that while comparisons with people in a better situation are motivating, comparisons with people in a worse situation are demoralizing (Dijkstra, Kuyper, Van der Werf, Buunk and Van der Zee, 2008). According to Leon Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, making comparisons creates and raises awareness. Learning other people's point of view is one of the basics of social integration (Adamska and Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2013; Barrett, 2005). In this way, the ways to becoming integrated with the society and improving personal development can be explored.

Social comparison has an important effect especially on the formation of the sense of ego (Öksüz and Malham, 2004). It has presented explanations about the reasons of behaviors and attitudes that we develop during the formation and development of the success, during the process of understanding our environment, people around us and ourselves and during the stages of social comparison (Sayiner, Savaşan, Sözen and Köknel, 2007).

Social comparison theory focuses on a person's relationship with others on the evaluation of competence and performance. According to this evaluation, the person tends to look at others and to assess himself in comparison with them. Some personal characteristics, such as jealousy, regret or accusation and guiltiness, effect the level of social comparison (Harreveld, Pligt and Nordgren, 2008; White, Langer, Yariv and Welch, 2006), and people tend to compare themselves with others because of the motive to develop the sense of ego. Another reason leading to this comparison is the wish to find out objective criteria while constituting the sense of ego (Lubbers, Kuyper and Van der Werf, 2009).

There are some studies stating that there is a relationship between social comparison and some personal conditions, such as stress, mood disorders, self-confidence and self-esteem (Green et. al. 2009). It has been found that being psychologically healthy is related with positive social comparison (Michinov, 2007); the sense of regret (Harreveld et al., 2008), and depression (Buunk, Zurriaga and González, 2006) are related with negative social comparison. There is a positive correlation between the frequency of social comparison and setting goals and motivation, and a negative correlation with burnout (Buunk, Ybema, Gibbons and Ipenburg, 2001; Buunk, Zurriaga, and Peiro, 2010; Halbesleben and Ronald, 2006; Tanrikulu, 2011). Buunk, Zurriaga, Peiró Nauta, Gosálvez, (2005) state that making social comparisons has a positive effect on work environment.

People's comparing their own behaviors with others' improves their self-awareness (Festinger, 1954). Awareness can be conceptualized as ability and self-awareness can be improved through various education programs (Church, 1997). Abilities and skills, which are acquired with education, are generally used in order to develop relationships with others, to cooperate, to appreciate them and to decide. "Awareness", which is formed as a result of self-observation, constituting the general framework of collaboration, leads behaviors with others to shape (Adamska and Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2013). According to Trapnell and Campbell's (1999) studies, although high awareness has psychotherapeutic effects and contributes to

getting better, it has some negative effects leading to depression and anxiety. In this case, self-awareness is recommended. The indication of this is the mutual presentation of our “thinking” and “behaviors which are our reflections” as good behaviors and one whole product.

According to awareness theory, when people are aware of themselves, they head for their personal views (Adamska and Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2013). According to Duval and Wicklund’s “objective awareness”, people firstly head for their inner world, and then they start the comparison process, based on a specific standard, in order to evaluate themselves. (cited from Ashley and Reiter-Palmon, 2012). People’s comparing themselves with others can be regarded as a data collection tool in different ways. Humans have a perception mechanism which groups the data collected in various ways and uses it as necessary, directs behaviors when needed and controls them. This perception mechanism in the human organism works unwittingly (Attneave, 1954).

According to Seligman and Csikszentmihaly (2000), in order to improve behaviors and feelings, firstly, the situation should be determined and then it should be developed. There are unlimited ways to develop them with coaching system (Seligman, 2007). According to social comparison theory, a person, comparing his own feelings, thoughts and behaviors with others’ and advancing his awareness, develops himself (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons and Kuyper, 1999) and also fosters his self-respect (Hodgins, Brown and Carver, 2007; Kipnis, 1961).

Purpose

This study aims to analyze emotional and cognitive effects of advancement in a person’s awareness about how he is perceived by other people.

Sub-goals

- i. To determine how a person perceives peer evaluations about his characteristics which he is unaware of.
- ii. To determine how a person perceives peer evaluations about his characteristics which he is aware of.
- iii. To determine how peer evaluations which aren’t compliant with perceived ego are perceived by the person.
- iv. To compare the perceptual effects of awareness, which is developed in academic, emotional and psychical ego.
- v. To determine the perceptual effects of awareness in terms of different variables.

Research Questions

- i. What kinds of emotions are experienced when the feedback about characteristics which the person is unaware of is positive?
- ii. What kinds of emotions are experienced when the feedback about characteristics which the person is not aware of is negative?
- iii. What kinds of emotions are experienced when the feedback about characteristics which the person is aware of is positive?
- iv. What kinds of emotions are experienced when the feedback about characteristics which the person is aware of is negative?
- v. What kind of positive emotions do evaluations unsuitable for perceived ego lead to?
- vi. What kind of negative emotions do evaluations unsuitable for perceived ego lead to?
- vii. What kind of emotions do positive evaluations about academic ego lead to?
- viii. What kind of emotions do negative evaluations about academic ego lead to?
- ix. What kind of emotions do positive evaluations about physical ego lead to?
- x. What kind of emotions do negative evaluations about physical ego lead to?
- xi. What kind of emotions do positive evaluations about emotional ego lead to?

- xii. What kind of emotions do negative evaluations about emotional ego lead to?
- xiii. Do emotions related to awareness change according to variables, such as gender, age and department?
- xiv. What kind of emotions does the process of practice lead to?

METHOD

The study was conducted through experimental design in one sample post-test model. Content analysis was used to analyze the data of the study.

Sample of the Study

11 male and 21 female, a total of 32 participants, who were studying pedagogical formation at Fatih University in 2011-2012 school year constituted the sample of the study. All of the participants had a bachelor degree.

Data Collection Tools

The data was collected online confidentially through a questionnaire with an adjective check list developed by Ugur (2007). In the questionnaire, the participants assessed the people they knew on 15 different criteria; "very hardworking, successful, friendly, steady, cultivated, helpful, respectful, kind and sympathetic, attentive in lessons, dressing well, patient, inquisitive, enjoying reading books, self-confident, imaginative". The participants answered the items on a 5-point Likert scale. Each person was assessed with the average score of an item given by evaluators for that person. The higher the score is, the better the person is at that qualification. The results were seen automatically after evaluation were done by students. To see the result of others' evaluations was depended on evaluations of at least ten other people.

Application and Data Analysis

For the study, firstly, the participants studying in the same environment and knowing each other were asked to sign up for www.akademikpencere.com, a website designed for academic consultancy where members could evaluate each other. The students, firstly, evaluated themselves and then other students whom they could observe. The warnings below were announced to the participants.

- i. Please, don't do evaluations if you didn't observe the student.
- ii. Please, only evaluate the items you know
- iii. Please, don't ask questions about your friends to other people during evaluation
- iv. Please evaluate yourself and take notes for future comparison.

It was announced to the participants that they wouldn't see others' evaluations among each other. Each participant assessed both himself and others through an adjective check list with 15 characteristics and including SWOT analysis on a 5-point Likert scale on a website. Their own evaluations about themselves for each adjective, the mean score of their friends' evaluations and general means were presented to the participants through graphs. There are examples of graphs presented to a participants in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.

After examining the results of these evaluations, participants were asked to write their thoughts and feelings.

At the second step of the study, participants' feelings and thoughts regarding the results of evaluation were analyzed thorough content analysis. In this analysis, frequency and categorical analysis techniques were used. According to the frequency analysis, the frequency of elements and units are listed as numbers, percentages and ratios. In categorical analysis, a content is separated into units and then these units are grouped according to some specific criteria (Bilgin, 2006). In the content analysis, the data was coded by two different researchers in order to ensure the reliability and the results were compared. At this stage, the contents were

analyzed to see whether researchers coded same sentences, paragraphs or statements in the same way. In this comparison, it was observed that there was 87% consistency between researchers' coding. Considering the fact that consistency at 80% and above is acceptable for reliability (Tümüklü, 2000), the acquired consistency was considered to be adequate for reliability.

Figure 1. An example of self-evaluation of students.

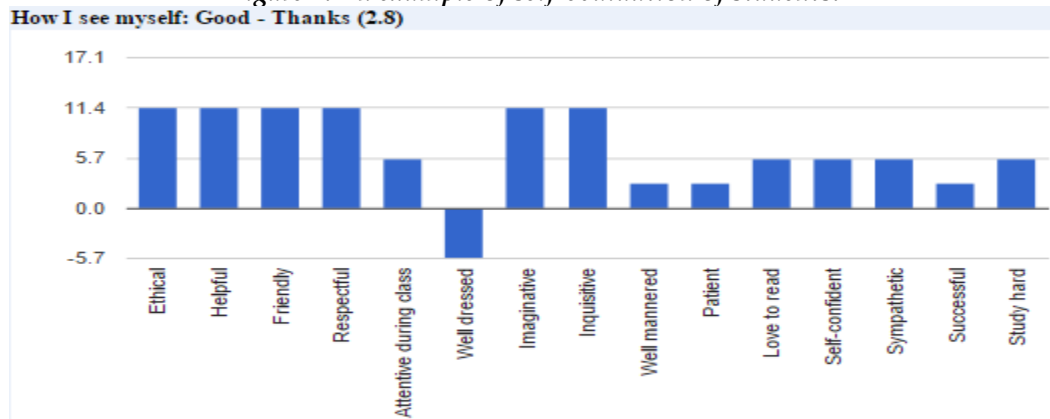
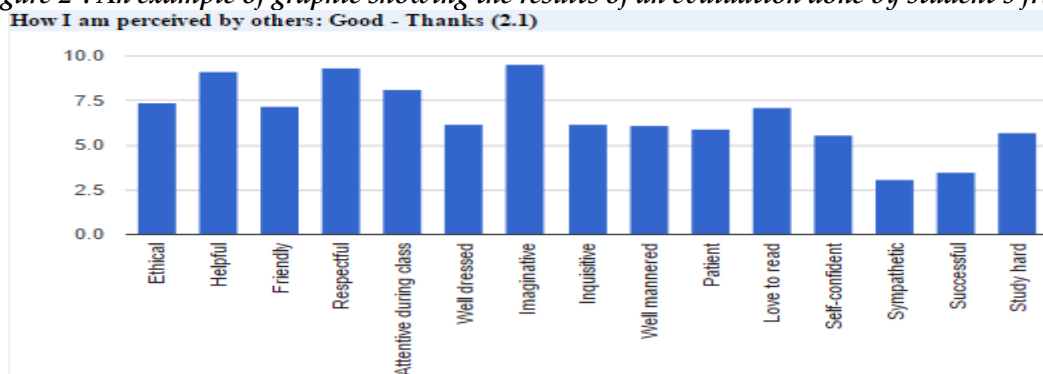
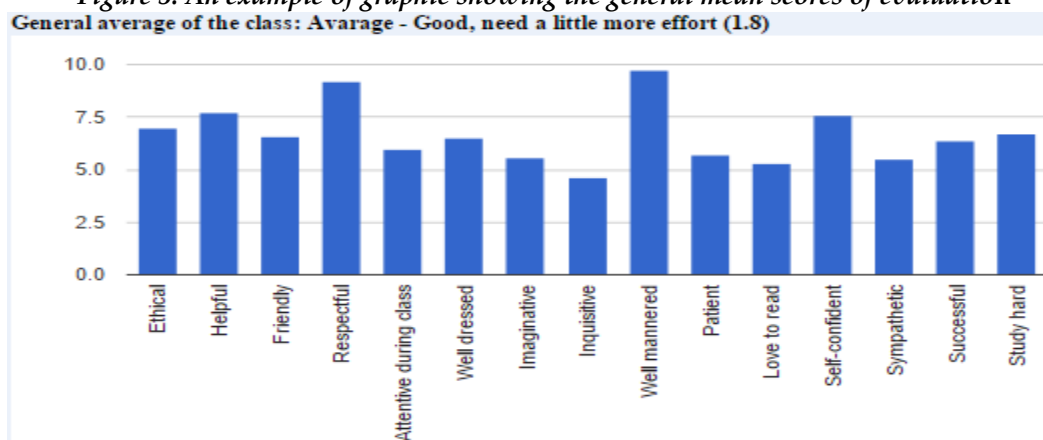


Figure 2. An example of graphic showing the results of an evaluation done by student's friends.*



*This graph can be seen after being evaluated by at least 10 other people.

Figure 3. An example of graphic showing the general mean scores of evaluation



FINDINGS

32 participants in this study were asked to write their own feelings and thoughts after reading their friends' evaluations about themselves. The analysis of feelings stated by participants shows that females stated mostly negative (43,35%), secondly positive (34,48%) and lastly neutral (22,66%) feelings; males stated mostly neutral (44,7%), secondly negative (35,9%) and lastly positive (19,4%) feelings. 35 different positive, 16 different negative and 14 different neutral feelings were stated by participants. Some examples of feelings stated are below:

Positive reactions: being happy, rejoicing, being honored, liking, accepting, being pleased, making plans of change, excitement, feeling healthy etc.

Negative reactions: being sorry, denial, accusing the questionnaire and evaluators, criticizing the practice, being disconcerted, finding criticism cruel, losing excitement, anger, not believing etc.

Neutral reactions: not surprised, rejecting to comment, praising the survey, being attentive to criticized points, will to change, taking lesson, unable to comprehend the consequence etc.

Findings within the scope of research questions are stated below:

Perception of Peer Evaluations Related to Unrecognized Characteristics

Table 1. Feedback about unrecognized characteristics

	Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Positive			Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Negative		
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Female	0	5	0	7	5	21
Male	2	1	2	7	3	10
Total	2	6	2	14	8	31

Participants stated that they generally had positive feelings (18,75%) when they got positive feedback; and that almost all of them had negative feelings (96,8%) when they got negative feedback. An example statement:

"Such a high score they gave me shows only that they are good hearted friends."

When negative feedback was given to the participants, the percentage of neutral feelings (43,25%) was higher than the percentage of positive feelings (25%). An example statement:

".....the results didn't surprise me a lot."

Perception of Peer Evaluations Related to Characteristics which the Person is Aware of

Table 2. Feedback about recognized characteristics

	Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Positive			Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Negative		
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Female	4	11	1	9	6	11
Male	2	3	0	2	1	1
Total	6	14	1	11	7	12

It can be seen that when participants got positive feedback about their characteristics, they mostly had positive feelings (43,75%); when they got negative feedback, they, in the same way, mostly had negative feelings (37,5%). However, it is remarkable that statements of neutral

feelings (34,4%) were close to statements of negative feelings. One of the participants expressed his negative feelings as below:

"Self-confident evaluation is below the average, I don't think so.... I find myself competent in this aspect and I don't believe that I am deficient."

Peer Evaluations Related to Perceived Ego

Table 3. Perception of Peer Evaluations Related to Perceived Ego

	Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Positive			Experienced Feelings When Feedback is Negative		
	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Female	3	6	2	4	3	20
Male	2	2	1	7	1	8
Total	5	8	3	11	4	28

When peer evaluations about perceived ego were positive, participants stated mostly positive (25%) feelings. When these evaluations were negative, they mostly stated negative (87,5%) and secondly neutral (34,4%) feelings. On the other hand, the percentage of reactions to negative evaluations was higher than the reactions to positive evaluations. An example of positive reactions given to peer evaluations is below:

"Although they didn't find me as hardworking as themselves, they must have found me more successful than themselves; that's why my graphical value was higher than theirs. I infer from this that I don't study enough, but because they find me successful though I don't study much, I have the potential. I felt happy for this."

Awareness in Academic, Emotional and Physical Egos

Table 4. The Effects of Awareness in Academic, Emotional and Physical Egos

Experienced Feelings	Neutral		Positive		Negative	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
When academic ego is evaluated positively	2	2	2	1	0	2
When academic ego is evaluated negatively	5	5	4	0	8	3
When physical ego is evaluated positively	0	2	5	2	0	1
When physical ego is evaluated negatively	3	5	0	0	4	3
When emotional ego is evaluated positively	2	3	4	4	2	0
When emotional ego is evaluated negatively	4	7	6	0	12	6
TOTAL	16	24	21	7	26	15

It can be seen that when participants were evaluated positively in terms of academic, emotional and physical egos, they mostly had positive feelings; and when they were evaluated negatively, they had negative feelings. When the percentages of positive, negative and neutral feelings are examined, it can be seen that the percentage of negative feelings (37,61%) is higher

than positive feelings' percentage (25,7%). The percentage of neutral feelings (36,7%) is close to negative feelings' percentage. When feelings stated by female and male participants are compared, it can be seen that while male participants stated mostly neutral, negative and positive feelings respectively, female participants stated mostly negative, positive and neutral feelings respectively.

Two examples of statements showing negative feelings:

"This evaluation is a kind of assessment done by malevolent people against me."

"I am an attentive person in the class. I listen to my teachers and response to their questions. I don't think this represents me."

An example of statement showing neutral feeling

"I observed that the items that I expected to have low means had low scores."

An example of statement showing positive feeling

"I have known since my childhood that it is the way people perceive me. I like it."

"Being evaluated in this way both honored me and made me happy"

The Effects of Practice Study

When they were asked about their feelings related to the process of practice, female participants stated 13 positive, 7 negative and 3 neutral feelings. However, male participants had only 2 positive statements. Some examples from their statements are below:

Examples of positive statements

"Improving myself is an important issue for me. This study helped me reaching these ways and I appreciate that it made me think about myself"

"I should state that I realized one more time that the more we express ourselves to other people and share our feelings, the more friends we can make in the life, and therefore, the more happy we can be."

An example of neutral feeling

"I was curious before my graph was formed, and I thought deeply after it was formed. I felt that the need to see myself from different perspectives is very strong."

An example of negative feeling

"I believe that there was nobody who liked me in that group, and so they gave scores randomly."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

People communicate with outer world according to their perceptions. Only people who have a healthy notion of ego can realize themselves (Selçuk, 2006). Discussing two different dimensions of ego, William James points out that the subject of the science should be "known ego". According to James, emotions which ego creates and behaviors which are motivated by emotions are important, too (Bacanli, 1997). According to social comparison theory, comparing our feelings, thoughts and behaviors with others' and developing our awareness, we can improve ourselves (Blanton, Buunk, Gibbons and Kuyper, 1999), and at the same time, we can enhance our self-respect (Kipnis, 1961). Emotions effect thoughts and thoughts effect behaviors. Expression of feelings is important for psychological well-being. Normal negative and positive feelings enrich the life (Kuzucu, 2007).

Results of the study are discussed as below.

Perception of Peer Evaluations Related to Characteristics which the Participants are Unaware of

Feelings which were expressed after positive feedback (18,75%) were significantly lower than feelings which were expressed after negative feedback (96,8%). This can be interpreted as indicating that regarding positive evaluations as normal, participants didn't give too much negative or positive respond to them. Negative feedback, on the other hand, leading people to think and perhaps to defend themselves, motivated them to express themselves. Emotional intelligence theory sustains that people can prompt their feelings for a purpose (Yesilyaprak, 2013). Participants' having positive feelings towards negative evaluations related to issues which they are unaware of can be interpreted as showing that they were open to criticisms.

Perception of Peer Evaluations Related to Characteristics which the Participants are Aware of

Participants mostly responded positively to positive feedback given to characteristics they were aware of, and responded to negatively to negative feedback. According to rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), one of the criteria of psychological health is self-acceptance (Çivitçi, Türküm, Duy and Hamamcı, 2009). Positive reactions of participants who know and accept themselves to positive evaluations and their negative reactions to negative evaluations can be considered as a natural and expected result.

Peer Evaluations Related to Perceived Ego

It is seen that participants weren't affected by positive evaluations or praises, on the contrary, they were sensitive to negative evaluations and they somehow defended themselves. The number of participants was 32, but the number of responds given to negative evaluations was 43. It can be seen that each participant expressed more than one feeling voluntarily. Thinking processes, such as nonfunctional excessive exaggeration, excessive generalization and irrationality, lead to emotional problems (Çivitçi, Türküm, Duy and Hamamcı, 2009). One of the reasons behind participants' negative evaluations could be that they may have experienced emotional problems as a result of negative evaluations. However, the high number of responds/reactions given to this item points out the importance of the concept of ego.

Awareness in Academic, Emotional and Physical Ego

The fact that female participants' positive and negative reactions in different ego types were significantly higher than male participants' reactions, and despite of this, male participants gave neutral reactions more often than females can be interpreted as showing that as a characteristic of their gender, females are more sensitive and emotional. Females were affected most negatively when they were evaluated in terms of emotional and academic aspects. The fact that males gave neutral reactions when their ego types were evaluated can be related to Turkish culture in which men are taught and expected to be strong. It can be assumed that males learn to give neutral reactions instead of positive or negative responds while they grow in the society. The fact that some of the male participants expressed their feelings in a "neutral" way when they were evaluated negatively can be interpreted as indicating that they found it normal and tried to give a strong stance expressing that they were not affected. There is not too much need to make an effort to be psychologically and physically healthy. Because people are born with instincts which will maintain their lives, they tend to find positive evaluations about themselves normal. On the other hand, negative effects on psychological health can change depending on one criterion (Özbay, 2005). In humanitarian theory, people are assumed to have two basic instincts: conscious ego and self-realization. People whose academic, physical and emotional egos are coherent are more likely to realize themselves (Nelson-Jones, 1995). Consequently, the fact that participants were affected by negative evaluations greatly was to

protect or/and to defend their sense of ego, and it is consistent with statements in psychological theories.

The Effects of Practice Study

When asked about their feelings about the process of practice, though all of the female participants expressed their feelings, only 2 (19%) of the male participants expressed their feelings. This fact can be interpreted as indicating that females thought on the results, gave importance to the study and was attentive to it, while males didn't pay attention regarding it just a study.

Generally, while female participants expressed 43,35% negative, 34,48% positive and 22,66% neutral feelings, males expressed 44,7% neutral, 35,9% negative and 19,4% positive feelings. According to Fromm, "tendency frame", one of the psychological needs, involves the values of the environment in which we live and norms (Güleç, 2009). In the society we live, criticism is generally regarded as a destructive statement through which unfavorable things are expressed. Because giving negative feedback and expressing feelings negatively are perceived as realism, the results of this study are consistent with the characteristics of our culture. The higher percentage of negative feelings is related with cultural setting of our society. On the other hand, the fact that males expressed their feelings mostly in a neutral way reveals that they are affected by the culture they live in and that whether they can know or define their feelings or not.

Consequently, increasing the number of female and male participants, developing the study and examining the results comparatively will contribute both to participants' personal development and change and to social peace.

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